

Behaviour and Justice in Primitive and Civilized Societies: The Inuit and Ourselves

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The Inuit referred to in this paper are the forefathers of those who live today, many struggling with the so-called "benefits" that we have brought them — too often with motivations that history will judge severely. For the Inuit, history is not a distant reality. The older ones, and the older generation of scientists or explorers who knew them well, speak of the "good old times" or the "historical times," these expressions referring to the latter part of the 19th and the earlier part of the 20th century. These terms could, as a matter of fact, designate the period up to World War II. With the advent of the war, the Inuit, who until then had to a great extent been the masters of their rugged land, saw the white man invading their territory and snowfields, and from then on they could only be a witness to their own transformation, having not much to say about mutations that they could barely understand. The Inuit were and are our immediate neighbours to the north, but they knew little about us and we little about them, although they were a primitive society much observed and admired by anthropologists.

The author is not an anthropologist and in fact has never set foot in the far north. The Eskimos here referred to are those he knew from childhood on through the writings of men who knew and loved them well — anthropologists, reputable explorers and some honest traders. These writings are indeed eloquent, but no less so than the Inuit art and their oral tradition, which has been recorded and translated. The more we learn about them, the more it is believed that they were established here in the north prior even to the beginning of our civilization. They were voluntary prisoners of the northland, which was theirs.

It was in this way that I have come to realize that they and we represent two groups of men whose ways of life are at opposite poles, standing for the primitive and our evolved selves. In reading about them in our age of reason, I cannot but reflect that they, living by their wits and emotions, retained a wisdom that we have long forgotten since we reached the age of enlightenment. I would like this paper to pay homage to the Inuit, who had a better understanding of what is basic common sense than modern rational man does.

The word "Eskimo" will mainly be used in this article. Eskimo, meaning

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“men who eat raw meat,” was the name given to the Inuit by the Indians and recorded in the *Jesuit Relations* in the early days of the French colonization, and was the term used to designate them in the writings of historical times. I have now come to think of them the way they call themselves, by the word we are now learning to use, namely, the Inuit, meaning “the people.”

The Inuit and Ourselves

Looking at the Inuit and at ourselves, our main concern being to determine how a primitive society such as theirs dealt with individual and social behaviour, it is tempting to say that they must have had a system of law. People who have reached a degree of civilization such as ours are not inclined to accept that a society can exist without laws. It is difficult to imagine that men can live together without some sort of individual and social controls. (Social controls and law are, of course, different, though laws are a form of social control.) When one wants to examine the differences in laws that exist in various societies, or even to question whether there were or still are societies whose existence is not governed by formal laws and principles of justice, we must first try to define a concept of law that would be valid for primitive, archaic and civilized societies. It may seem easy to define such a universal concept, applicable at all times and to all groups, but in fact it is as difficult to find a universal concept of law as it is to find a universal concept of health.

Hoebel, one of the great scholars in the study of primitive law, was very much concerned to find such a concept and he examined modern jurisprudence looking for elements that could help him. He came to this definition: “A social norm is legal if its neglect or infraction is regularly met, in threat or in fact, by the application of physical force by an individual or group possessing the socially recognized privilege of so acting.”

In seeking to define such a universal concept, Hoebel divorced himself from the traditional ‘natural law’ approach. As he states, “If there perchance be supernatural forces shaping, limiting, or even determining human law, these, we hold, are not subject to objective determination. . . .” His definition assumed that in order for there to be legal norms or law, forbidden behaviour must be regularly met with physical force, and this situation presumed the existence of a recognized authority empowered to enforce. When we wonder if primitive peoples had judicial systems comparable to civilized ones, what we are really asking is whether they had some forms of behaviour which were regularly dealt with by an authority according to Hoebel’s definition of a universal concept of law. We do not, for example, approach the issue by asking whether killing or theft were crimes. We are simply looking at how primitive people view unacceptable or forbidden behaviour, how civilized people view it, and how such behaviour is dealt with.

We know that what is criminal in one society may not be so in another, and what was criminal in the past may no longer be a crime. We are not concerned with forbidden behaviour as such, but how it is dealt with by a concept that we call law. A major preoccupation will thus be to examine to what extent the Inuit were governed by a concept of law, and to be more

precise, how a society such as theirs has survived with an absence of law, as some people would have it, or, as Hoebel puts it, with the bare bones of a law structure that he has called "Rudimental law in a primitive anarchy."

Hoebel's Approach to Primitive Law

To study law in different primitive societies, Hoebel formulates for each society studied a series of postulates that could be translated into "legal or quasi-legal principles and norms. . . ." These postulates become a clear statement on the manner of life of the Eskimos, but as he points out, this is the way *we* see the Eskimos, not the way they see themselves: ". . . none of these postulates have been explicitly formulated by the Eskimos themselves – for that is not their way of thought."

The first two postulates deal mainly with the relationship between the Eskimo and the world; they are that ". . . all animals by virtue of possessing souls, have emotional intelligence similar to that of man," and that "Man in important aspects of life is subordinate to the wills of animal souls and spirit beings." From these postulates derive not so much laws as we know them, but the Eskimos' way of relating to their environment, an important aspect of which is their oneness with life in any of its forms, be it animal, fish or bird. These two postulates that appear to govern Eskimo life do not give rise to any definite laws as we know them, but rather to innumerable taboos inspired by fear of the spirits and the emotional life that non-human animals possess, and above all, to ecology, a scientific concept absolutely unknown to them, as a concrete reality of their life. Humans and animals have to live in harmony and share nature as equal partners.

This concept is literally contained in the following lines, at the same time rich in meaning and the beauty of their literary form:

I went to the river to fish
My wife my children are hungry
It was cold
I fished for many hours
I have come home alone
I have no fish
Was it me or the fish that failed
– An Eskimo Thought

The third postulate states that "Life is hard and the margin of safety small." From this premise derives certain behaviour which is severely sanctioned in a more advanced society, but is regarded as justifiable in the context of Eskimo life, *i.e.*, infanticide and senilicide, namely, getting rid of persons who are unable to contribute to the life of the community. For the Inuit, such behaviour, while regrettable, was functional and by no means criminal, neither in intent nor in execution. Senilicide was seen as a painful duty insofar as it involved helping the aged to do what they themselves deemed necessary and inevitable for the ultimate good of the community. It should be noted that in Eskimo life these practices differed from their equivalents in other primitive, even more evolved, groups. There was never, for example, in any of the literature we read, mention of any ritual or

sacrificial killing of infants or young people. We will not, however, deal with this issue in this paper but merely state that this practice probably did not exist in the Inuit society. We suggest that the sacrificing of human life belonged to peoples more evolved than the Eskimos and was found also in some civilized groups.

Postulates 4 and 5 read as follows: "All natural resources are free or common goods," and "It is necessary to keep all instruments of production (hunting equipment, etc.) in effective use as much of the time as possible." From these two postulates derives an important aspect of Eskimo life, namely, that although 'personal' property was accepted, 'private' property was subject to common usage, a distinction being made between the two: *personal* property was regarded as the things closely related to a person, such as clothing and other intimate possessions, whereas weapons and hunting equipment constituted *private* property. Though a man might acquire and own more than one set of tools, it was accepted that equipment that was not being used could be freely borrowed, without even the necessity of asking permission. Possibly the most important aspect of these two postulates is that a person could not retain exclusive possession of more than he was able to use, to the point that though a man could be relatively rich — and they even have a name to designate such a person — if he did not share the excess of his goods, he was resented, considered to be an undesirable member of the group, and even hated.

According to the sixth postulate, "The self must find its realization through action." Individuals were free to act with minimal rules, even without any. Prestige derived from individual action, being a good hunter, fisher, and so on, but for the male it was important not only to be a successful food-getter but to be a successful competitor for the possession of a woman as well.

Postulates 7 and 8 state: "Women are socially inferior to men but essential in economic production and child-bearing," and "The family is the basic social and economic unit and is autonomous in the direction of its activities." Much can be said about the role of women in Eskimo life: they were certainly industrious and at the service of the male. Though submissive, they nevertheless played such an important role and were so necessary to a hunter's life that most of the murders that took place were related to competition for or the wish to own a wife.

The ninth postulate states: "For the safety of the person and the local group, individual behaviour must be predictable." It was because of the effect of this postulate as a way of life that mentally disturbed individuals who were aggressive, and persons who had killed more than once and who the group had reason to believe might do so again, were sometimes put to death. Those who posed a constant nuisance to society, such as chronic liars, or lazy and unproductive individuals, could become such a burden to the group that they could also be done away with as a last resort.

People who know the Eskimos are impressed by their down-to-earth orientation, their intelligent practicality in facing life in the north, and Rasmussen's writings are often quoted to illustrate how they think and feel about themselves and the world. He kept asking an Iglulik Eskimo about such abstract matters, and this man, slightly annoyed, answered: "Too much

thought only leads to trouble We Eskimos do not concern ourselves with solving all riddles. . . . You always want these things to make sense, but we do not bother about that. We are content not to understand."

Bearing this quotation in mind, and proceeding from Hoebel's postulates and his definition of a universal concept of law, we will now examine to what extent the Inuit group were governed, as we are, by principles of justice enforced by law in individual and social conduct. Hoebel's definition assumes the existence of an authority exercising community leadership or something amounting to at least a minimal form of government, and he, like others, is clear on the subject: "The aboriginal Eskimo has no government." There are, however, two influential figures: the head man and the shaman, who "provide a degree of social direction." We will comment briefly only on the role of the head man, his influence being more directly related to our subject.

The head man usually stands out from the others, recognized as the best hunter and possessing skills that influence others, but in the end it is his personality that counts most. He is the one whom the group "tacitly, half-unconsciously recognized as first among equals." "Head man" is the name given him by the white man, but the Eskimos have more meaningful expressions to designate him. The Caribou Eskimos use the term, "He who thinks" (*imbumatak*), implying thinking for others; the Unalut call him, "The one to whom all listen" (*anaiyuhok*), and the Baffin Island Eskimos refer to him as "He who knows everything best" (*pimain*). He is not elected, nor even "selected." He simply emerges among the group and as long as he is respected and his advice is followed, he is the head man; he ceases to be the head man when he is no longer followed. He has influence, but no authority; he is respected, but he does not give orders or judgments, especially in matters that we would define as belonging to government or administration of justice. Thus, we could not find among the Eskimos what amounts to an authority that meets with regularity and with defined coercion or force certain behaviour that is forbidden by what could amount to, if not laws as such, at least rudimentary forms of law.

Crimes Against Person: Sanctions and Social Defense

The major offense in the Inuit society was homicide, and there is certainly reason to believe that in the early days, when many observations had been made of groups of 'unspoiled' or 'unchanged' Eskimos, some of the groups seemed insecure and beset by the fear of being murdered. Rasmussen was told that on trips they would move in single file and would hesitate to go off to one side, as to do so might be interpreted as a gesture of evil intent. His observations, as well as those of others, illustrate this fear and insecurity among themselves, the fear of being killed out of revenge or other motives. Rasmussen reports that in the 1920's, when he was living among a group of Muskox Eskimos made up of fifteen families, all of the adult males in these families "had been involved in homicide either as principal or accessory" and "the motive was invariably some quarrels about women."

We will not elaborate here on the wife-lending exchange, a liberal practice of the Inuit in dealing with sexual matters, but it is important to stress that wife-lending was quite different from adultery. As Hoebel notes, the Eskimo

man had at all times to prove his strength, and one area was certainly in competition for women. Wife exchange or lending was something that he permitted his wife to do, but adultery was poorly tolerated. Such behaviour often resulted in conflict that would be terminated by a homicidal act.

Another important factor is that no matter how Eskimo men dominated the women, who were at the service of their husbands, he was in fact helpless and almost crippled in the north without a woman, since he depended on a wife for preparation of food, making clothes, hard labor when necessary, and many other chores. This was not a question of comfort or luxury but a matter of basic survival. Another conflict over women involved marriage by capture. There are many documented cases of such marriages: a man who wanted to take a woman to wife but was rejected by her family might kill the whole family except for the woman involved.

Most authors mention that the person nearest in kin to a murder victim had the duty and responsibility of avenging the death. The danger, of course, was that revenge might give rise to other murders, leading to interminable feuds that were a threat to the life of the Inuit communities, groups related to one another and sharing the same territories. The question of whether feuds existed in the north is an interesting one. Certainly most Eskimos seemed very conscious of the possibility, and it seemed that the fear of being murdered, the fear of revenge and feuds was a basic one. It is interesting, however, to note that an authority such as van den Steenhoven, *à propos* of documented cases of murder, notes that "blood revenge was not known to have followed on any of the historic (1900-1940) cases of plain murder . . . this in spite of the fact that most competent authors stress the duty of the nearest kin to take revenge for the murder."

If one judges by the Eskimo folklore, events and legends transmitted in the oral literature, it is evident that feuding was something that was very much in mind. Contact with the whites undoubtedly brought a sharp decrease in both murder and feuds, but it seems that the Inuit themselves devised mechanisms to prevent them and personal revenge. If the homicidal act took place within a family, other families in the community did not take any action; the problem was felt to be one that the family had to solve itself.

In the cases reported, it seems that the one thing the Eskimos were most concerned about was predictability of behaviour, insofar as they could assess it. A man who had killed, and who might even be guilty of mass murder for wife capture, could be left alone if he was a good hunter, of good repute, and if the group was reasonably certain the act would not be repeated. In order to avoid feuds, the man who had killed might move away. As already noted, Rasmussen reported on his stay with a community of such men and their families who had grouped themselves together because they had all been involved in homicidal acts. Forming a community and living apart from the original group seemed to be one of the devices to avoid feuds.

Other mechanisms were homicides that could be referred to as executions. Two types of persons were considered as a great danger to a family or group of families living together: insane, violent persons, and some sorcerers, who were felt to exercise the power to persecute the community. It was the unpredictability, especially of insane persons, and particularly when they had already killed once, that incited the Eskimos to take action. Here the

head man would play an important role in agreeing to the execution. When there was community consent, after consultation among themselves, someone was designated to be the executioner, almost invariably someone related to the person to be executed, in order to ensure that no personal revenge would follow. As the family had agreed on the step and there was community consent, there was a sort of double barrier against the danger of revenge leading to feuds.

Although collective revenge of one group against another is known and has been documented in a few instances, it seems to have been a rare occurrence, though it is often referred to in legend, myth and the oral literature. When we look at Eskimo views on the most serious type of behaviour, *i.e.*, homicidal acts, this was undoubtedly the offense that was feared most, and it is interesting to note that it would be the exceptional case that was not the result of conflict in human relationships. Homicidal acts for other motives, such as in the course of another crime like theft, are generally unknown among them, so that we can say, as regards homicide, that as a group the Eskimos committed their crimes in personal relationships, a motivation that is only one of those current in our own civilization. Indeed we seem to have many more excuses to kill one another, for example, greed and gain. The Eskimos appeared more consciously practical than we have been in trying to prevent this sort of crime by sharing and thus instinctively or naturally correcting human inequality among men. Looking at the way they dealt with the problems, we find them far removed from a primitive anarchy too often incorrectly described as being dominated by brute force.

Crimes Against Property: Sanction and Protection

The fact that all natural resources were free or common goods did not mean that Eskimos did not have a concept of property, but private property as defined in our social and economic system is not an adequate term to describe it, so that we prefer to use the terms "communal" and "personal" rather than "private." This does not mean, as some anthropologists believe, that Eskimos (and Amerindians) had reached a stage in their evolution which could be termed the nearest approach to communism, as formulated in the mid-19th century and early 20th century. Eskimos are far removed from thinking in terms of philosophy or politics. They have things in common and share because sharing is necessary for survival, not because it emerged from an ideology. "Personal" instead of "private" property really means what belongs to a person: clothing, ornaments, amulets, or other intimate belongings close to the actual body. For the rest, a harpoon, a weapon or a kayak, though unquestionably the property of one man, would be shared if he was not using it. As many writers point out, it would be unthinkable for an Eskimo not to share a harpoon if he had two and another hunter was without one. The sharing was accompanied by rituals, as exemplified by the way they would share the meat when a seal was killed. Sharing was most evident in the way they spontaneously shared hospitality in winter or summer. For that reason, theft was not a common offense, but people who did engage in stealing, chronic lying, or laziness were seen differently. Some men have this pattern even in primitive society, and these were the ones who were, if we can use the word, "antisocial," although in Eskimo life this word

did not have the meaning we give it. These were individuals who did not fit in, and they were called, "One for whom we do not care." Such a man was regarded as "an unpleasant man," one who "lacked brain," "a pitiful person," "a nuisance." In extreme cases, because of such men's unpredictability and by consent of the group, they could be put to death, and such cases have been reported. One could speak of them as executions, and it is interesting to observe that in a society such as this, not to share, to be lazy or a chronic liar, was in fact a great danger to the common life. We can also comment that one of the things the Eskimo feared most was unpredictability, and in that sense these individuals were a threat, since nobody knew when or whether they could be counted on to contribute their share to the community in times of need.

We would stress that at no time in dealing with deviant individuals did the Inuit have it in mind to enforce law in the spirit of justice as we know it. Their sole preoccupation was "exclusively to restore peace," and this term, used by Birket-Smith, meant the ordinary, regular course of life, nothing else. If, for example, they killed a man or woman suspected of witchcraft, it was to restore peace in the community, just as in the cases of those addicted to theft or laziness. This maintenance of as orderly and peaceful a daily life as possible was not thought of in terms of being achieved by punishment. Nor did they question whether what they did was just or not. This raises the important question of the origin of justice in human society, a concept which too many people assume is a feeling that is more or less innate in human nature, when in fact it is a very civilized philosophical approach to the problems encountered in human relationships.

Before resorting to drastic measures, the Inuit employed other mechanisms. One that is frequently commented on is withdrawal or going away from a problem. For example, with a chronic thief, liar or shiftless individual, their first reaction was not to execute him, but to withdraw from him, to go away, to leave the camp without him, more or less boycotting him in order that he himself would go away from the group. Withdrawing from a problem in order to solve it was not something that was planned but something that happened, was natural to them, and a skilled, brave hunter told one author (van den Steehoven), "In case of dispute I rather would run away than fight." The Eskimos seem to have known Laborit's "*mécanisme de la fuite*."

Another way of dealing with problems was by ridicule. Using ridicule is part of the Inuit humour, of their way of life, and as van den Steenhoven has said, it is a subject that deserves to be studied on its own merits. It was used almost ritually in dealing with problems, sometimes spontaneously and other times in organized social rituals, such as song duels, boxing contests, wrestling matches, and so on. Possibly one of the best examples to illustrate this is given by Birket-Smith of how ridicule was used spontaneously as an instrument of social control. He narrates that in one of the tribes there was an habitual thief and when he entered the house of an old woman, she started to sing:

Old shit, old shit,
He makes me ashamed.

He was looking at me when I was eating,
Old shit, old shit.

After he left the house of the old woman, all the children began to sing this ditty whenever they saw him, and he ultimately acquired the nickname of "Analursche" (old excrement). The story goes that this experience cured him of his thieving habits. Whether this anecdote corresponds to what actually happened really does not matter, but it certainly reflects the way Eskimos used humour and ridicule in their daily life, and these are two assets that were probably very important ones to ensure survival in the north. It is said that ridicule cannot kill us, but it seems that in primitive people it more or less did. Indeed, while it may not actually have killed, it was something that went deeply to the heart of the people.

The Inuit and Primitive Anarchy

Before formulating some thoughts on a comparison of our way of life with that of the most primitive people we know, we would like briefly to sum up Hoebel's conclusion. He noted that the Eskimo society, "without government, courts, constables or written law, maintained its social equilibrium, . . . with primitive legal mechanisms, or their equivalent . . . Here we have come . . . to the bare bones of the legal." Van den Steenhoven went further, saying that even these minimal bare bones of the legal did not exist for the Inuit, and concluded that the Eskimo society of former years was "simply life in anarchy", adding, ". . . it might be interesting – though not necessarily comforting – to all the jurists to realize that these Eskimos offer a living and contemporary illustration of the possibility of a society . . . existing and maintaining itself through many generations in a state of true anarchy." Commenting also on this life in anarchy, Birket-Smith said:

Thus among the Eskimos there is no state which makes use of their strength, no government to restrict their liberty of action. If anywhere there exists that community, built upon the basis of the free accord of free people, of which Kropotkin dreamt, it is to be found among these poor tribes neighbouring upon the North Pole.

Here indeed was the anarchy that Kropotkin was dreaming of, the anarchy that civilized societies such as ours can dream about after having known and enjoyed all the gifts and hindrances of living in a society based on an over-use of reason. The dream of the modern philosophers of anarchy is quite understandably that of the coming of a new state of anarchy, but if it ever comes it will never be the one the Eskimos knew. At this stage in our civilization, while we can still talk to a few of the most primitive creative philosophers ever known, the few true Eskimos who remain, we can tangibly measure and feel how near yet how far apart these two anarchies are.

Notes on Rousseau, Freud and Marcuse

The question of culture and civilization has been a major preoccupation for philosophers and human scientists. Certainly Jean-Jacques Rousseau is one who approached the problem nearest to a Freudian way of thinking, and

he is remembered for his statement that "Man is by nature good, and only institutions have made him bad!" Throughout his life he was concerned with the relationship between man and civilization. In 1753, when the Academy of Dijon posed the question, "What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorized by natural law?", Rousseau replied with one of the classic texts of the literature: *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*. It is in this discourse that he asked himself if civilization were not in fact a disease and if the greater part of our ills were not in fact of our own making. In thinking of man, who uses his reason, he even came to formulate the view "... I venture to declare that a state of reflection is a state contrary to nature, and that a thinking man is a depraved animal." ("*L'homme qui médite est un animal dépravé.*") Rousseau, however, was not as naive a person as he is often described. He plainly said that his thoughts on the natural man were in fact purely a working hypothesis. He himself declared that the state of nature that he was talking about "... perhaps never existed and probably never will. . . ." In trying to imagine what primitive man was, or the "noble savage," he explained his position even further: "Let us begin, then, by laying facts aside, as they do not affect the question. The investigations we may enter into . . . must not be treated as historical truths, but only as conditions and hypothetical reasonings." However, in reconstructing this primitive man, Rousseau came very close to a description of what the Eskimos were like, a society in which the authority was the head man and in which private property did not exist. Even this primitive man was not idyllic. He had his conflicts, he had to contend with his nature and his aggression. In fact, he very much resembled the Eskimos whom we have described. Rousseau placed the start of the rise and ultimate fate of culture or civilization (these two words being used here as synonymous) at the time when man discovered private property, and he is very severe about the first man who, having said, "This is mine, this is thine," found people simple-minded enough to believe him. From then on, according to Rousseau, civilization was born, and in his own time, prior to the French Revolution, he certainly believed that we had reached a critical point.

Although quite different, Freud came to a comparable conclusion in *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, when he described the price men have to pay to achieve culture and civilization. "The first requisite of culture is justice," a justice that ultimately requires more and more laws and controls at the expense of man's gratifications. Culture and civilization also required suppression or sublimation of instinct, according to Freud, and thus led to renunciation of instinctual gratification. In his view, this renunciation at the end amounted to the destruction of civilization.

We know that in his writing on civilization, subjects such as the death wish are forcefully advanced, and, already in 1930, prior to World War II, Freud worried much about the fate of man:

The fateful question of the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent the cultural process developed in it will succeed in mastering the derangements of communal life caused by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction. In this connection, perhaps

the phase through which we are at this moment passing deserves special interest. Men have brought their powers of subduing the forces of nature to such a pitch that by using them they could now very easily exterminate one another to the last man. They know this — hence arises a great part of their current unrest, their dejection, their mood of apprehension. And now it may be expected that the other of the two ‘heavenly forces’, eternal Eros, will put forth his strength so as to maintain himself alongside of his equally immortal adversary.

Whereas one could hitherto dismiss such a conclusion, to do so now would be folly.

Vis-à-vis such pessimistic views, Marcuse wondered if the price leveled on civilization could be avoided; in the opening statement of his book, *Eros and Civilization*, he says: “Sigmund Freud’s proposition that civilization is based on the permanent subjugation of the human instincts has been taken for granted. His question whether the suffering thereby inflicted upon individuals has been worth the benefits of culture has not been taken too seriously — the less so since Freud himself considered the process to be inevitable and irreversible.”

He further says, “The methodical sacrifice of libido, its rigidly enforced deflection to socially useful activities and expressions, is culture.” (Freud and Marcuse both use the words *culture* and *civilization* as being synonymous.) Marcuse pointed out that the sacrifices had paid well, as seen in technically advanced civilizations, but, considering that civilization based on repression, is, in the end, self-destructive, he wondered if “a non-repressive civilization, based on a fundamentally different experience of being, a fundamentally different relation between man and nature, and fundamentally different existential relations” is possible.

Marcuse does not deny the need for repression in dealing with instincts in order to assure man’s survival, but he makes a strong plea against what he refers to as “surplus repression,” that is, additional control over and above what is indispensable for civilized human association, controls arising from the specific interest of domination. His view that civilization is possible without excessive controls comes as a very creative contribution, one which we hope will not reveal itself to be utopian; it opens new horizons on what Freud believed civilization to be, *i.e.*, an inevitable, progressive, irreducible repression.

In concluding, we cannot help but think that though we and the Inuit may seem to be far apart, we may really be quite near, as we meet at a point in a circle. These people, who have no words for crime and justice, lived their lives knowing that the essential things were to maintain the peace and to survive. They were very close to their instinctual drives and were not protected as we are by the numerous social, religious and criminal codes we have devised to encompass our individual and communal life. In thinking about their way of life and our own, we may well ask ourselves if we have not perhaps abused our capacity for reasoning to hide or deal with our drives. It is in thinking about this possibility — or reality — that the points discussed in this paper may be interesting not only as anthropological or philosophical questions, but as an urgent clinical problem that Winnicott describes thusly:

“If society is in danger, it is not because of man’s aggressiveness but because of the repression of personal aggressiveness in individuals.”

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*The selected bibliography contains the books that were available at hand when the paper was written.